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SUBJECT: MONUC ANALYST DISCUSSES EVENTS IN THE KIVUS,
ORIENTALE; QUESTIONS KABILA-MUSEVENI RELATIONSHIP

REF: KAMPALA 207

Classified By: Ambassador William Garvelink for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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¶1. (C) Summary: Johan Peleman, Chief of MONUC's Joint Mission Analysis Cell, told PolCouns and visiting Washington analysts on February 26 that, although the joint FARDC-RDF operations against the FDLR had been successful in North Kivu, dealing with the FDLR in South Kivu represented enormous challenges. Rwanda, in Peleman's opinion, would not intervene in South Kivu due to widespread anti-Rwandan sentiment amongst the population. MONUC has begun the process to reposition more troops to South Kivu to carry out joint operations with the FARDC. Further integration of CNDP elements into the FARDC remains stuck on political issues, such as the passing of an amnesty law. In Peleman's view, the CNDP was no longer a national political threat to the GDRC. The renegade 85th Brigade has apparently been redeployed to Masisi, with a rumor that RDF forces are guarding the brigade's Bisie cassiterite mine in Walikale. Peleman singled out logistical obstacles as the biggest challenge in the operations against the LRA. FARDC and Republican Guard forces continue to exhibit discipline vis-a-vis the population in Haut Uele. In Peleman's opinion, the GDRC will not allow the Ugandans to remain in the DRC indefinitely (reftel). Some in the GDRC, according to Peleman, believe Uganda has a hidden agenda, including a repeat of its exploitation of DRC timber and gold resources. Peleman opined that a complex triangular relationship exists between Kabila, Kagame, and Museveni, with Museveni clearly displeased over and distrustful of the new rapprochement between Kinshasa and Kigali. End summary.

Operations in North Kivu successful

¶2. (C) PolCouns and visiting Washington analysts met on February 26 with Johan Peleman, Chief of MONUC's Joint Mission Analysis Cell (JMAC) -- the organization's intelligence arm -- to discuss developments in the Kivus and Orientale Province. Peleman said that MONUC was encouraged by the degree of cooperation between the GDRC and GoR in carrying out joint operations against the FDLR. Over 4,500 Rwandans had returned to their native country, including just under 500 ex-combatants. While there had been a number of FDLR reprisals, Peleman maintained that they were generally small in nature, albeit widespread. Human Rights Watch had claimed that the FDLR had killed up to 100 civilians in one attack, but MONUC then confirmed that this was the total from 14 attacks in separate locations.

South Kivu: the challenge ahead

¶3. (C) Peleman emphasized that dealing with the FDLR in South Kivu would be a much bigger challenge, and everybody, especially the FDLR itself, recognized this. The bulk of the rebel group, including military leader Sylvestre Mudacumura, had relocated to the extreme southern part of South Kivu. In this area, there was only one FARDC battalion deployed and it was composed primarily of Mai Mai elements who were sympathetic to the FDLR. There are rumors that there are three RDF brigades across the border at Cyangugu, poised to enter South Kivu. In Peleman's view, the RDF does not want to become involved in operations in South Kivu. The Rwandans could not count on the support of any of the local population, compared to the support they received from the Rwandophone community in North Kivu. Some elements of the South Kivu population, particularly the "old Mai Mai," were vehemently hostile towards Rwanda. (Comment: In addition, the Banyamulenge, or South Kivu Tutsis, would also oppose any Rwandan intervention in South Kivu. End Comment.)

How can MONUC help?

¶4. (C) Peleman noted that, because of the reconfiguration of MONUC forces in response to the CNDP actions in Autumn 2008, MONUC had only half the number of troops in South Kivu compared to North Kivu. MONUC was concerned that it does not have enough forces to adequately carry out its civilian protection mandate, should the FDLR step up reprisals. MONUC, according to Peleman, recognizes this problem and is

KINSHASA 00000192 002 OF 003

planning to re-deploy back to the pre-August 2008 configuration, with more troops in South Kivu. In the meantime, MONUC will reinvoke its "mentoring" of FARDC battalions, which MONUC has trained. A key question in Peleman's view is: how far is the FARDC willing to go in its South Kivu operations?

Integration stalled

¶5. (C) Peleman said that, while the initial accelerated integration process successfully integrated as many as 4,000 CNDP troops into the FARDC, that process "is stuck." The snag, according to Peleman, is a series of unresolved CNDP demands: passing a law on amnesty; recognition of CNDP military ranks; and some discretion regarding where CNDP integrated forces can be deployed. The question of amnesty is "huge," because, as Peleman pointed out, Nkunda had consistently warned his commanders that they were all facing charges based on the CNDP's 2004 attack on Bukavu. Peleman speculated that Rwanda would ultimately push to ensure integration was completed at a certain level.

Whither the CNDP?

¶6. (C) Peleman acknowledged that there was a residual element in the CNDP that could very easily revert to banditry, perhaps even linking up with other negative forces in the region. However, the days of the CNDP representing a formidable political threat to the Kinshasa regime were over now. There will still be issues, which are important for the rank and file, that need to be worked out, e.g., return of refugees. But on the whole, the CNDP has been fairly quickly integrated into Congolese institutions, including the national police, the ANR (intelligence service), immigration, and customs. The "old CNDP" was in tatters, with Nkunda and Rene Abandi under house arrest in Gisenyi and Bertrand Bisimwa under periodic interrogation by Rwandan security forces.

Commercial arrangements and the infamous 85th brigade
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¶ 7. (C) Peleman said it is still too early to see how the joint operations had affected established commercial interests in the region, especially the profitable trade in minerals. MONUC had received some reports that Rwandan troops were guarding the Bisie mine, the largest cassiterite mine in North Kivu, and formerly under the monopoly of the FARDC's renegade 85th Brigade. According to Peleman, Colonel Samy Matumo, commander of the brigade, is in Goma and the majority of the brigade has been redeployed to Masisi. In the end, Peleman stressed that there was no common ideology linking the FDLR and FARDC elements in mining areas -- only common commercial benefits. The GDRC has apparently asked MONUC for assistance with anti-fraud investigations in the region. Peleman added that MONUC would probably include assistance with the deployment of economic inspectors as part of its larger stabilization plan for the East.

The Nande and Bashi

¶ 8. (C) Acknowledging that proponents, led by former North Kivu Governor Serafuli, of strengthened Rwandophone domination of North Kivu had the upper hand, Peleman cautioned that two important ethnic groups -- the Nande and Bashi -- were seemingly disadvantaged politically by the joint operations. According to Peleman, several prominent Bashi politicians -- notably National Assembly President Vital Kamerhe and former Presidential Advisor Marcellin Cishambo -- had lost or were losing influence (Comment: It is not clear to what extent these individuals' political troubles are related to events in the East. End comment). In Goma, rumors remain rampant that North Kivu Governor Paluku (a close associate of Kamerhe) will soon be removed from the scene. While the new dynamics have aggravated certain ethnic tensions, Peleman did not predict that the situation would completely deteriorate. Peleman asked cynically whether the Nande or the Bashi had any capacity to be a nuisance absent a military force. However, Peleman warned that some Nande politicians, notably former Foreign Minister Mbusa, might consider "a Ugandan option," fomenting problems through the ADF-NALU rebel group.

KINSHASA 00000192 003 OF 003

Operations Against the LRA: Logistical Hurdles

¶ 9. (C) Turning to Operation Lightning Thunder (OLT), Peleman said the main obstacle to effectively dealing with the LRA was simply enormous logistical challenges. The joint operations were pursuing the LRA in an area approximately 100,000 square kilometers in size, with very few roads. Even with more troops on the ground, what MONUC needed most in the area was additional helicopter support to help it carry out its civilian protection mandate. Peleman noted that the Russian Government, led by its Ambassador in Kinshasa and military attache in Lagos, were pushing hard to deliver 18 helicopters to MONUC. However, it remained unclear whether or not these helicopters were really available. (Note: Reports that India, the sole provider of rotary wing aircraft in the Kivus, may soon withdraw its forces from MONUC would severely cripple MONUC operations in the east. End note.)

¶ 10. (C) Peleman confirmed what post has heard from a variety of sources (including MSF, UNHCR, and MONUC officials on the ground) that the two FARDC and three Republican Guard battalions stationed in Haut Uele continue to exhibit unusually high levels of discipline vis-a-vis the civilian population. Part of this, according to Peleman, was due to MONUC's housing, feeding, and medical caring for the DRC forces.

Kabila unhappy with SPLA and Ugandans?

¶11. (C) According to Peleman, President Kabila is disappointed by the SPLA, claiming the South Sudanese army did not properly close the border soon after the operations began and asserting that leaks about the operation came from South Sudan. Peleman reflected that Kabila's perception could be in response to accusations from some in Ugandan circles that DRC elements tipped off Kony before the attack.

¶12. (C) Peleman predicted that the GDRC would not continue to extend OLT indefinitely because of fundamental suspicions that the Ugandans has a hidden agenda (reftel). The GDRC, according to Peleman, was concerned that the Ugandans would once again seek to profit from the lucrative timber and gold resources in the region. In addition, the GDRC and GoU continued to squabble over oil rights in Lake Edward, with Kabila particularly incensed that former Executive Outcomes officials were advising the GoU. Kabila, according to Peleman, held a grudge against Executive Outcomes for their support for Rwanda in the 1998-2003 war and because of EO's long history of association with the Mobutu regime.

¶13. (C) Peleman affirmed that a complex triangle existed between Kabila, Museveni, and Kagame. Museveni, Peleman stated, was uneasy over the rapprochement between Kigali and Kinshasa, primarily based on his hostility towards Kagame. Museveni could, if he wanted to irritate Kabila, re-ignite the Ituri rebel groups. Moreover, Museveni could potentially play another card towards Kinshasa and Kigali: some Nkunda loyalists were reportedly in Uganda hoping to receive support from the GoU.

¶14. (C) Comment: We are not in a position to corroborate or refute much of the analysis presented by Peleman, a Belgian citizen who has been with MONUC for some time. His detailed knowledge of the big issues and leading players in the eastern Congo and neighboring states, however, is impressive.

End comment.

GARVELINK